DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 858 CE 026 418

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TITLE Characteristics of Unemployed Youth. Final Report.
INSTITUTION Pennsylvania State Univ., University Park. Div. of Occupational and Vocational Studies.
SPONS AGENCY Pennsylvania Research Coordinating Unit for Vocational Education, Harrisburg.
PUB DATE Jul 80
CONTRACT 83-9820
NOTE 58p.: Small type in figures will not reproduce well.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents: Adults: Black Employment: *Educational Objectives: Employment Level: *Employment Patterns: *Employment Statistics: Females: Labor Force: Labor Force Nonparticipants: Males: Marital Status: *Unemployment: *Vocational Education: Whites: Youth: *Youth Employment

ABSTRACT

Described in the report are the social, demographic, experiential, educational, and ascriptive characteristics of sixteen- to nineteen-year-old jobless youth in the United States. Population sampling, data collection, organization, and reporting methods applied in the Current Population Survey (CPS) of 1979 (the major source of data) are reviewed. The issues of measurement, labor market shifts, and unemployment/out-of-the-labor force flows are discussed. In the section on the scope of youth joblessness labor force participation, unemployment, and non-participation are presented graphically on the basis of sex, marital status, and race. Difficulties for determining the prospects for youth unemployment are discussed. It is suggested that because a wide array of social, economic, and legal factors interact to affect youth joblessness, vocational education can contribute only indirectly to the alleviation of youth unemployment through improving the employability skills of youth. Suggestions for further research include (1) clarification of whether the reduction of youth unemployment is a goal of vocational education: (2) determination of barriers to youth employment beyond skill deficits constraining what vocational education could do to alleviate youth joblessness: and (3) determination of what vocational education should do in this area. (MN)

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FINAL REPORT

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH
(Contract No. 83-9820)

David Lynn Passmore

Occupational and Vocational Studies
The Pennsylvania State University

University Park, Pennsylvania

July, 1980

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BUREAU OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

RESEARCH COORDINATING UNIT
FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Acknowledgements

The original encouragement and financial opportunity to conduct the research reported in this essay was provided by Carroll Curtis and James Lewis of the Pennsylvania Research Coordinating Unit for Vocational Education. Clifford Clogg and Mu Chian of the Center for Study of Population Issues at Penn State provided computer tapes and consultation for me to analyze data elements from the 1977, 1978, and 1979 Annual Demographic Files of the Current Population Survey. William Verity of the Penn State Computation Center provided invaluable consultation on the use of graphics routines used throughout this essay to plot youth labor market data. Ed Geer was my research assistant for this project. The support of each of these people is acknowledged gratefully.

I am, as you might expect, solely responsible for any inconsistencies, peculiarities, or errors of any kind--even typing errors, since I typed this essay myself--that may disturb the reader's peace of mind.

Abstract

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

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$4921.00 Federal
$ 0.00 Non-Federal
5/1/80 to 6/30/80

Summary

Provided in this report are characteristics of jobless youth in the United States. First, measurement concepts, tools, and issues in determining joblessness are reviewed. Youth labor markets are found to be characterized by large flows in and out of the labor force, making measures of youth unemployment underestimates of the scope of youth joblessness. Then, trends, factors in 1979, and the outlook for youth joblessness are presented. By all measures, youths over the past 30 years have exhibited less attachment to the labor force than adults. Non-whites and 16-17 year olds have had even more depressed labor market data.

Data presented and research reviewed in this report merely describe the definition and scope of youth joblessness for policy analysis and consideration in vocational education. Necessary next steps are: (a) clarification of whether vocational education sees the reduction of youth joblessness as a goal; (b) determination of the barriers to youth employment, beyond youth skill deficits, that could constrain what vocational education could do to reduce youth joblessness; and (c) consideration of the consequences of youth joblessness so that whether vocational education should attempt to design policies and actions to reduce youth joblessness can be determined.

Audience

The report produced through this project will be useful to planners and policy-makers in vocational education as well as to students of the youth labor market.

Publication Available

Final Report

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The sky is falling....no, the bottom is falling out. As this essay is being written, the media are adapting all sorts of lively phrases to describe our economic woes. I suppose the choice among descriptions depends upon whether one compares the current economic recession to a spate of bad luck hurled at us poor mortals by the Fates or to some slapstick tumble by a buffoon. But, yes, after so many months of warning, hedging, and handwringing among economists and politicians that we may have stopped listening, the recent sharp decline of major indicators of production, employment, and sales points to a deep economic recession.

Almost as in summary of the economic crisis, inventories of the nation's manufacturers, retailers, and wholesalers jumped 1.3 percent between March and April of 1980, while sales slumped 3.3 percent. As inventories rise, businesses tend to decrease production and to lay off workers. "This shows the recession is for real," said Lee Phillips, senior economist for Data Resources Inc., a Lexington, Massachusetts, forecasting firm. "The degree of increase (in inventories) is a measure of how rapidly the economy has deteriorated in a very short time over and above declines that business expected and planned for" ("Inventories rose 1.3 percent," 1980). Adding to these economic problems, the OPEC nations unleashed at their June 1980 meeting still another price increase which eventually will ripple throughout the world economy.

Without much surprise in light of these economic indicators, unemployment rates are beginning to increase. Unemployment rates rose 1.0 percent or more from March 1979 to March 1980 in 10 of 47 States reporting to the Bureau of Labor Statistics ("State and Metropolitan Unemployment," 1980). Decreases of this magnitude were reported in only three States and the District of Columbia. Moreover, unemployment rates increased by 1.0 percent or more in this same period in 51 of 163 reporting metropolitan areas, while decreases of this magnitude were reported in only 16 areas. Twenty areas even reported increases of 2.0 percent or more; there were no metropolitan areas with a similar percent decrease.

Although any increase in the general unemployment rate is likely to affect all demographic groups, the latest recession may worsen the already dismal unemployment picture for youth. In December 1979 ("Current Labor Statistics," 1980, Table 2, p. 76), the overall unemployment rate was 5.9 percent, with 4.2 percent and 5.7 percent for men and women, respectively, 20 years of age and older. However, 16 percent of youth, 16 through 19 years old, were unemployed, with a 13.9 percent unemployment rate for whites in this age group. Remarkably, 34.3 percent of non-white youth

were unemployed. These unemployment patterns are evident throughout 1979 and recent years (Leon & Rones, 1980).

To be tallied as unemployed, a youth must not be working and must be searching actively for a job. Some analysts believe that youth labor market difficulties remain understated because youth unemployment figures do not include so-called "discouraged" youth workers: youths not working nor looking for work because they do not believe jobs are available for them for a variety of reasons. Figures usually are not reported by age, but about 740,000 discouraged workers were counted during December 1979 (Leon & Rones, 1980, Table 8 and p.10).

In recent years, similar youth unemployment figures have been presented internationally. According to Melvyn(1977), the general unemployment level for the 24 member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development was about 17 million, or 5.3 percent of the total labor force in December 1975. Seven million of the unemployed, or 41 percent, were under 25 years of age, even though people in this age range represented 22 percent of the labor force. Young workers accounted for 36 percent of the increase in unemployment in the member nations between 1973 and 1975. By 1976 over one-third of the unemployed in the European community was under 25. In Australia, 40 percent of the total registered unemployed was under 21 at the end of 1976. The world youth unemployment problem has been reviewed extensively (see also: Congress of the United States, 1976, pp.48-50; Mangussen, 1977; Mushkin & Jung, 1978; OECD, 1977, 1978; Reubens, 1978; Scully, 1978; and Wirtz, 1978).

The National Child Labor Committee (1976) maintained that youth joblessness is primary among many indicators (others being: high suicide, juvenile crime, and runaway rates) of society's failure to prepare youth for adulthood. President Carter (1980) has described youth joblessness as a threat to our nation's internal security. Yet, the causes and effects of, as well as solutions for, youth joblessness are debated intensely. For instance, the post-war baby boom (Adams & Mangum, 1978, p.19; Moore, 1977), minimum wage legislation (Ragan,1977), changes in the nature of the youth labor market (Freeman, 1972), job search problems experienced by youth (Flanagan, 1978), decline of serious attachment among youth to the labor market (Folk,1968), suburbanization of jobs (Kain,1968; Harrison,1974), lack of appropriate skills (Moynihan, 1968), and increases in female labor force participation (Gramlich,1976) are among the factors proposed to account for youth joblessness.

Friedman (1975) and others in the popular press ("Behind the Unemployment Figures," 1977; Buckley,1977; "Whither the Unemployment Rate," 1977, "Wrong Number,"1977; "Young People Without Jobs," 1977) have asserted that youth joblessness has minor effects because the majority of jobless youth are simply between jobs, are provided for generously by transfer payments of

some sort, and are in families with one or more other earners. During the first quarter of 1976, 6.9 million of the unemployed were family members, and almost 68 percent of these unemployed people had at least one other close relative who was employed (Hayge,1976).

On the other hand, Schlozman and Verba (1978) maintained that--even though unemployment typically is of short duration, often voluntary, protected by unemployment insurance, and concentrates on other than primary wage earners in a household--unemployment extracts current psychological and future economic costs. Becker and Hills(1979b) suggested from a review of available literature that:

> both the duration of the unemployment experience and the stability of employment during the teenage years are important. Human capital theory, dual labor market theory, and the job competition model all point to the long-run consequences of any inability to take advantage of on-the-job training opportunities. Diminished training levels, in turn, would contribute to lower future earnings both through lower wages and fewer weeks worked. The latter would be an expected consequence of the tendency for turnover costs to decline with skill level. (p.69)

Derber(1978) also has documented the profound sense of alienating bitterness generated by youth joblessness.

Juvenile crime and youth unemployment are related (Becnel, 1978; testimony of Brenner, Glaser, and Nagel in Congress of the United States, 1978; Glaser & Rice, 1959; Mangum & Seninger, 1978; Phillips, Votey, & Maxwell, 1972; Singell, 1967; Sullivan, 1973), although whether crime or unemployment are cause or effect, or are simultaneously determined, is unknown. Turner(1977) observed a relationship between mental illness and unemployment in a community study. And, Voydanoff (1977) linked youth unemployment with family turmoil.

As Killingsworth(1976) has lamented, almost any recent plan for reducing unemployment seems to have been checkmated by inflation. However, a number of solutions have been advanced to reduce youth unemployment and to negate its effects. The solutions often follow the assumptions held by those proposing them about the structure and operation of the economy. For example, many of those proposing solutions believe that youth unemployment can be controlled through manipulation of fiscal and monetary variables; others prefer providing training or other means--among others, involvement by unions (Rainwater, 1977) and national youth service (Eberly, 1977; Price, Zelinsky, & Johnson, 1976)-- to improve the match between the skills of workers and skills currently in demand (compare classic opposing statements by the President's Council of Economic Advisors, 1965, and

Killingsworth, 1965). For the training aspect of this latter solution, a wide array of programs, including vocational education, are authorized through federal legislation.

Focus

Described in the remainder of this essay are the characteristics of jobless youth, who are, for the most part, 16 through 19 years of age, in the civilian, non-institutional population of the United States. This information was derived from an extensive review of published reports and from analyses of national data. This essay does not explore the causes or effects of youth joblessness, except as these are correlates of this problem . The literature on these causes and effects is vast, and it will be reviewed in a subsequent report. Rather, the task for this essay is primarily descriptive: what are the social, demographic, experiential, educational, and ascriptive characteristics of jobless youth? A fundamental assumption undergirding this essay is that an answer to this question will provide grist for policy discussions by vocational educators interested in improving the employability of youth.

For the interested reader, other general reviews of youth joblessness in the United States were provided by Adams and Mangum(1978), Anderson(1977), Bowers(1979), Brimmer and Harper(1970), Chambers(1978), Davidson(1978, pp.2-4), Dayton(1978), Ginzberg(1979,1980), Griffin(1977), Huck(1979), Lekachman(1975), London(1979), McGraw(1979), Meany(1975), the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Work and Unemployment (n.d.g), National Public Radio(1976), North(1978), Sartin(1977), Staples(1975), Stevenson(1978), Stokes(1979), Swanson(1978), and Tussing(1975). Garraty(1978) chronicled the social history of the use of unemployment concepts and information in economic thought and public policy throughout history.

Organization

The following section of this essay, prerequisite to understanding the topic of this essay, contains a review of measurement concepts, tools, and issues in assessing youth labor force status. These measurement matters often are confused and debated in youth employment discussions. Research reviewed in this section reveals the practical difficulties encountered in relying on a measure of youth unemployment as the sole measure of youth joblessness.

Tallied in section III of this essay are characteristics of jobless youth derived from analyses of time series data pertaining to youth labor markets, a review of published reports, and analyses of data from the Annual Demographic File of the

Current Population Survey(CPS) of 1979. Briefly, the CPS is a household sample survey conducted monthly by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to provide estimates of employment, unemployment, and other characteristics of the general labor force, of the population as a whole, and of various subgroups in the population.

Described in section IV are the implications of the literature reviewed and the data analyzed in this essay for vocational education policy and research. A summary and references follow the final section of this essay.

II. PEOPLE WITHOUT A JOB: MEASUREMENT CONCEPTS, TOOLS, AND ISSUES

Concepts

According to Garraty(1978), joblessness was considered throughout most of the history of the Western world to be a product of individual sloth and just plain sinful ways. Except for the disabled (and those who masqueraded as such), joblessness was assumed to be voluntary. The Great Depression of this century, though, highlighted for many citizens as well as policy-makers that a certain amount of unemployment is involuntary.

Keynes(1936) introduced the theory of involuntary unemployment. According to Keynes, the labor market at equalibrium could contain voluntarily unemployed people who quit their old jobs and are either searching for new ones, or are moving, or waiting to move, to a new job. In fact, this would be a sign of a healthy labor market with useful worker mobility allowing the efficient match of workers to jobs (Friedman,1968). A disequalibrium in the labor market is implicit in the theory of involuntary unemployment. Involuntarily unemployed people were defined as those willing to work at a wage currently being paid to other individuals like themselves but who find no jobs available (see Lucas, 1978, and Malinvaud, 1977, for brief, but more complete, explanations of Keynes ideas). Of course, this definition is quite subjective and difficult to implement.

Early attempts at counting the unemployed involved simply asking people whether they were unemployed or employed (National Commission on Employment and Unemployment, 1979, Chapter 2, contains a brief history of American practices since 1870 to count the labor force; see also Morton, 1969). Doubts about this procedure led the so-called Gordon Committee (President's Committee to Appraise Employment and Unemployment Statistics, 1962) to suggest a more behavioral definition so that, "each concept should correspond to objectively measured phenomena and should depend as little as possible on personal opinion or subjective attitudes" (p.43). The recommendations of the Gordon Committee, with frequent but slight modification, persist to this day.

Definitions of labor force status used in the monthly CPS are applied in most government and private statistical work (for an extended discussion of definitions see: "Explanatory Notes," 1980, p.162; United States Department of Labor, 1976, Chapter 1). Employed persons comprise: (a) all those who work at least one hour in a week as paid employees in their own businesses, professions, or farms, or who work 15 or more hours as unpaid workers in a family enterprise; and (b) all those who are not working but have jobs or businesses from which they are absent temporarily because of illness, bad weather, vacation, labor-

management disputes, or personal reasons, whether or not they are paid by their employers for their time off and whether or not they are seeking other jobs. Volunteer work is excluded from this definition, as is own home housework, repair, or painting.

Unemployed people comprise all those who do not work, but who made specific efforts to find a job within the last four weeks, and who are available for work(except for temporary illness). Included with the unemployed are those who fit these criteria and are waiting to be called back from a layoff or are waiting to report to a new wage or salary job within 30 days.

The civilian labor force comprises the total of all civilians classified as employed or unemployed. The total labor force also includes members of the Armed Forces stationed either in the United States or abroad. The unemployment rate represents the number unemployed as a percent of the civilian labor force. People under 16 years of age, and all those confined to jails, asylums, hospitals, and the like are excluded from the count of the employed, unemployed and the labor force. Most reported labor force statistics refer to the civilian, non-institutional population, age 16 and older.

Note that the unemployment rate not only can change with changes in the number employed in a civilian labor force of constant size, but also with changes in the size of the civilian labor force. This seems to be one reason why many in the public seem confused about why unemployment was high at the same time as marked increases in the numbers employed in the last decade (Liebling, 1977).

The labor force participation rate is the ratio of the civilian, non-institutional labor force to the total civilian, non-institutional population.

People not in the labor force are all civilians 16 years and older who are not classified as employed or unemployed. For most of these, family responsibilities preclude participation. For most of the remainder, going to school, ill health, or advanced age prevent jobholding or jobseeking.

Some people classified as out of the labor force are described as discouraged workers. These people are not actively seeking work because: they think that jobs are not available in their lines of work or geographic area; they tried to find work but stopped because they were unsuccessful; they feel that they lack necessary schooling, training, experience, or skills; they feel employers consider them too old or too young; or they have some personal handicap in finding work.

Of course, these labor force concepts can be applied within gender, age, marital status, racial, etc., groups. Youth labor force figures usually are expressed as a percent of the youth

civilian non-institutional population. The December 1979 youth unemployment rate of 16 percent referenced previously in this essay means that 16 percent of those between the ages of 16 though 19 did not have a job but were seeking one, expressed as a percent of the youth civilian labor force.

Note that the youth unemployment rate represents a limited segment of the youth population which may be experiencing labor market problems. In a like manner, some unemployed youths may be voluntarily unemployed, to use Keynes distinction, and may not be actually experiencing any hardship. Remember though, the concepts presented here were not developed to define hardship--merely status in the labor force according to the criteria described.

Naturally, many observers grow impatient with the ambiguities that they perceive in unemployment classification because they feel that it is, "a fairly common practice among politicians and economists to 'solve' a problem by defining it out of existence" (Bullock, 1973, p.1). So, many have extended the definitions presented here far beyond their specific denotations (see, e.g., Lauterbach, 1977, for contrasts of psychological and sociological with economic conceptions of unemployment).

Whatever ambiguities exist, the unemployment rate is the most prominent politically among the labor force concepts, although some believe that this emphasis is improper (see, e.g., Cain, 1979b, Lovati, 1976, Lovell, 1977, Schwab & Seater, 1977, Shiskin, 1976, and Smith, 1977). Shiskin(1977) reported that about $16 billion in federal money was distributed in 1977 through federal funding formulae driven, at least in part, by estimates of local unemployment rates. As Kenski(1977) has shown, unemployment data have influenced presidential popularity. And, the unemployment rate frequently is the only one of all of the possible informative labor force and economic indicators which makes front page news monthly.

Tools

The CPS provides monthly data on the economic status and activities of the population of the United States. And, germane to this essay, it is the only source of estimates of total unemployment, whether or not the unemployed counted are covered by unemployment insurance. Reviewed in this subsection are population sampling, data collection, data organization, and data reporting methods applied in the CPS. An exhaustive description of these topics is contained in a technical paper prepared by the United States Department of Commerce(1978); Simler(1978) provided a brief, less technical treatment of CPS methods.

Sampling. Two samples are selected within the CPS. A national sample was designed to provide estimates for the nation; a State supplement was added for more reliable estimates for the District

of Columbia and several of the smaller States. This discussion focuses on the national sample.

The CPS sample is located in 461 sample areas comprising 923 counties and independent cities with, coverage in every State and the District of Columbia. In an average month, about 68,000 housing units or other living quarters are assigned for interview. About 55,000 are found to be eligible for interview, with the residual units vacant or converted to non-residential use. About 100,000 people age 16 and over are eligible for interview in these households. Of the occupied housing units available for enumeration, approximately three to five percent are not interviewed in a given month because the residents are not found at home after repeated calls, are temporarily absent, or are unavailable for other reasons.

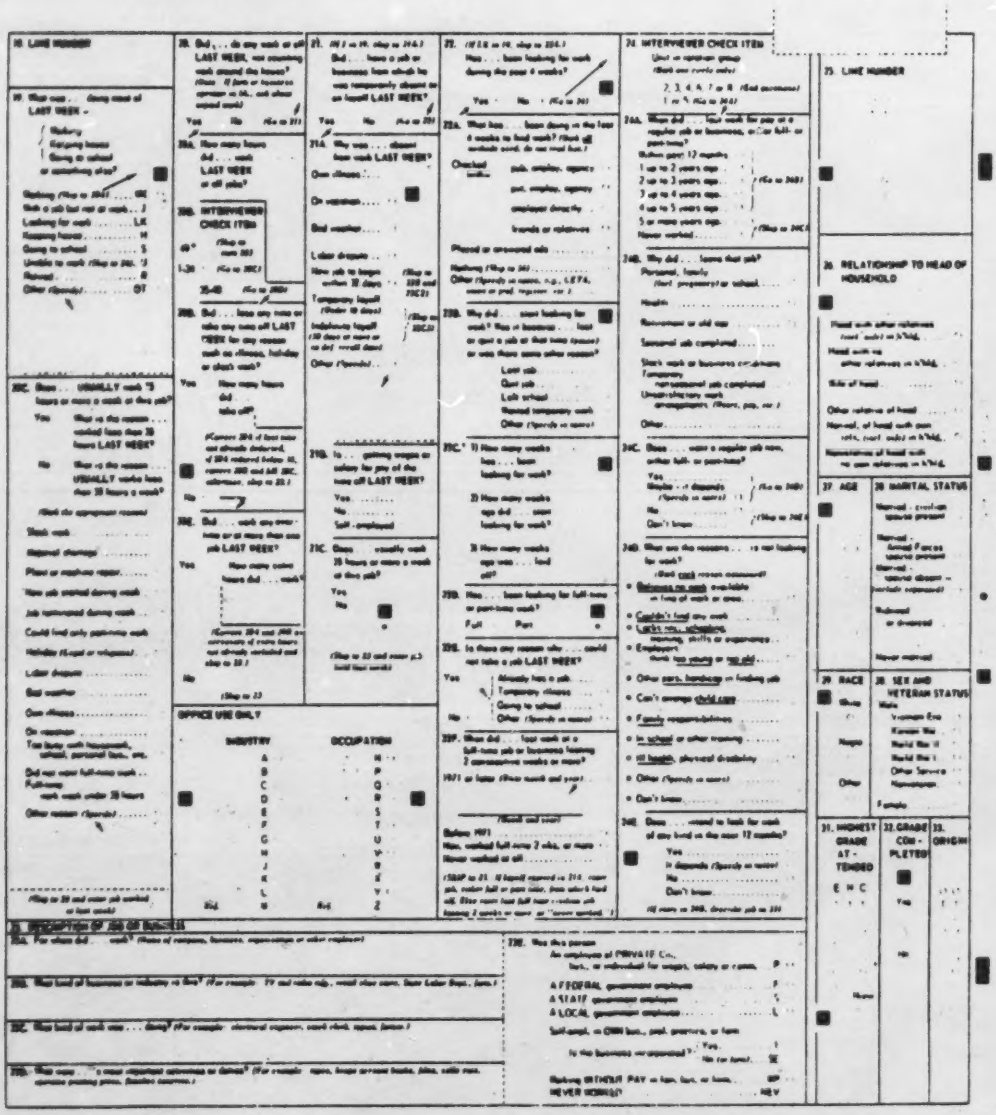
An understanding of the rotation of the CPS sample is important for understanding the research reviewed in the remainder of this essay. The prime reason for rotating the sample is to avoid interviewing households indefinitely and, thus, also to avoid the cumulative effects of biases that might occur due to repeated questioning. To rotate the CPS sample on a gradual basis, the sample is segmented into "rotation groups" which are interviewed for a total of eight months, divided into two equal periods. Rotation groups are interviewed for four months, not interviewed for eight months, and, then, are interviewed for the same four calendar months of the next calendar year. Under this rotation scheme, 75 percent of the CPS sample households are the same from month to month, and 50 percent are the same from year to year.

For persons not in the labor force, detailed questions are asked about previous work experience, intentions to seek work, desire for a job at the time of the interview, and reasons for not looking for work only in the "outgoing" rotation groups, i.e., the fourth and the eighth months a household is in the sample. These questions help to determine the number of discouraged workers.

Data collection. Each month, during the calendar week containing the 19th day, trained and supervised interviewers contact a responsible member in each of the sample households for the CPS. During the first enumeration, detailed personal characteristics of all household residents are recorded. The interviewer visits the sample household personally during the first, second, and fifth months the household is in the sample. In other months, the interview may be conducted by telephone if the respondent agrees to this procedure. About 50 percent of the households in any given month are interviewed by telephone.

At each monthly visit, the questionnaire displayed in Figure 1 is completed by the interviewer for each member of the household 16 years of age and older. The questionnaires are edited at Census Bureau field offices to catch omissions, inconsistencies,

FIGURE 1. BACK PAGE OF THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE: NOVEMBER, 1976



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 1978, P.40

illegible entries, and errors. Then, questionnaires are sent by the end of the week after enumeration to the Jeffersonville, Indiana, office of the Census Bureau. Here the raw data are transferred via optical sensing equipment to magnetic computer tapes, and, then, transmitted by wire to the computers in the Census Bureau's Washington office where they are checked for completeness and consistency.

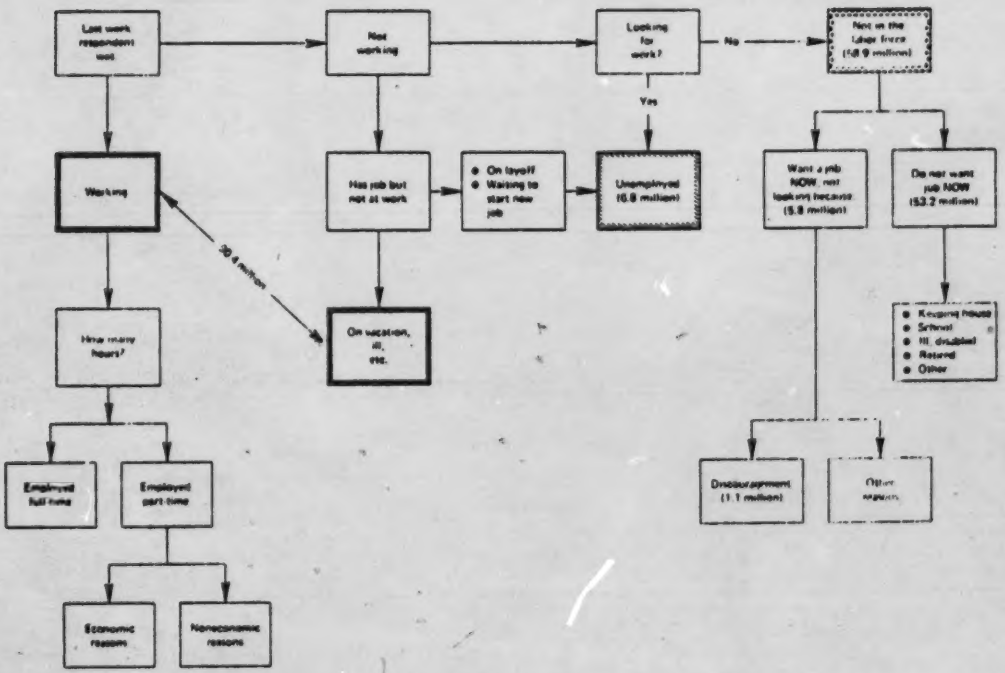
Each March, a set of supplemental questions related to the previous year's income are included in the CPS. Edited data from the March CPS and its supplement are called the CPS Annual Demographic Files and have been available on magnetic computer tapes for public use since 1968.

Data organization. Using complex numerical procedures, sample responses are transformed into estimates of economic and social characteristics of the United States population. First, adjustments are made for households which could not be interviewed. Second, CPS sample values are weighted by the age, gender, race, farm-nonfarm residence, and other characteristics of the total population because the distribution of the characteristics of the sample selected may differ somewhat from national characteristics. As an illustration, shown in Figure 2 are decision points and point estimates from the CPS used to allocate the labor force status of the United States population during the second quarter of 1977.

Data reporting. Around the beginning of the month following CPS data collection, estimates of the social and economic characteristics of the population are released to the public through the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The monthly Bureau of Labor Statistics periodical, Employment and Earnings, provides the most detailed monthly and historical CPS estimates, including seasonally adjusted estimates. Additional reports of monthly CPS data are presented in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Monthly Labor Review. Reprints of Monthly Labor Review articles, together with technical notes and additional tables, are published as Special Labor Force Reports. A wide range of unemployment indicators, reflecting diverse judgments about the significance of unemployment, are presented in Bureau of Labor Statistics' publications (see Shiskin, 1976, Chart 1, Table 1, and pp.3-8, for a discussion of the range of indicators available).

One hoary and heavily debated aspect of CPS data reporting is the seasonal adjustment of CPS figures. CPS estimates are adjusted to eliminate the effects of such factors as climatic conditions, industry production schedules, opening and closing of schools, holiday buying periods, and vacation practices. Many of these factors are surprises in any year, so previous estimates sometimes must be revised months after they appear. To many people(often members of Congress), these adjustments do not add

FIGURE 2. STATUS OF THE LABOR FORCE, 2ND QUARTER OF 1977



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1977

to the credibility of the economic and social indicators the CPS reports. However, these seasonal factors, if unadjusted, might mask short-term changes of importance in CPS statistics. CPS statistics typically are reported in unadjusted and seasonally adjusted forms(Interested readers should consult United States Department of Labor, 1976, Appendix A, and United States Department of Commerce, 1967, for the technical details of the seasonal adjustment methods applied).

The reliability of CPS estimates are reported also. There are two types of errors possible in a CPS estimate--sampling and non-sampling. The former are reported routinely (see, e.g., "Explanatory Notes," 1980, Tables A through I, pp. 167-172), while the latter are often the subject of special Census Bureau studies.

Non-sampling errors in the CPS can be attributed to such sources as household non-interviews, problems in implementing CPS labor force and other definitions, unwillingness or inability to respond to CPS questions accurately, and errors in coding and processing data as well as lack of precision in mathematical methods used to estimate population parameters. Sampling errors arise out of the variation that exists because a sample rather than the entire United States population was surveyed. For example, monthly youth unemployment estimates currently are considered to be reasonably accurate within plus or minus 56,000 youth.

Issues

Unemployment figures derived from the CPS receive close scrutiny because of their stature as economic and social indicators. Along with this scrutiny has come a certain amount of criticism, much of which is especially pertinent to youth unemployment measurement and analysis. Criticisms reviewed in the following paragraphs include: measurement difficulties; inability to measure "pure" unemployment due to labor market shifts; and insufficient discrimination between people unemployed and out of the labor force.

Measurement. Almost with a wink, many discussions of unemployment problems state a caveat that published unemployment figures fail to measure "real" unemployment (see, for instance, Portland State University, 1977, for an example of such skepticism). Straussman(1977) presented major Marxian grounds for criticism of U.S. labor force concepts, stating that discouraged workers and other nonparticipants should be considered unemployed. Gellner(1975) presented an application of a similar enlarged concept of unemployment with United States data. The concern about labor force definitions is expressed frequently in discussions of unemployment rates among blacks(e.g., Staples,1975).

Beyond disputes about the scope of CPS definitions, the CPS criteria for determining who is unemployed are quite elastic. To be tallied as unemployed, a person must actively search for work. As much as speaking with friends about employment opportunities or reading want ads constitutes job search under CPS criteria. Compounding this problem is that one household member generally responds for all household members, adding to the possibility of errors in recall or reporting. Borus, Mott, and Nestel(1978) attributed differences in youth unemployment rates from the CPS and the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience (NLS) (Parnes,1972) to the NLS use of direct interviews with youth compared to the CPS use of proxy respondents. On the basis of this evidence and the differences observed between CPS and NLS youth unemployment rates, Borus, et al., concluded that a CPS undercount of unemployed youth existed during the periods studied.

Experience with CPS sample rotation groups reported by Bailar (1973) indicates that the general unemployment rate can vary as much as ten percent between the first and last interviews in the rotation scheme. Respondents interviewed more than one time are more likely to indicate that they did not search for work during the preceding month, perhaps revealing growing comfort with the enumerator.

Between 1961 and 1966, CPS reinterviews of sample households revealed about one-fourth of those in the CPS sample were classified improperly as unemployed (United States Department of Commerce, 1968). This measure of discrepancy in classification between two interviews did not count those who were misclassified consistently, of course. Nor did this measure the misclassification of people actually employed or out of the labor force as unemployed.

Several measures have been proposed as substitutes for the unemployment rate. The ratio of the number employed to the total population, called the employment/population ratio, is one of these measures (Schwab & Seater, 1977, and Smith, 1977, present standard arguments for the adoption of this measure). This ratio contains less sampling error than the unemployment rate because of the relative magnitude of the numerators in the employment/population ratio and the unemployment (unemployed/civilian labor force) rate. Cain (1979a, p.36), however, found the employment/population ratio to be an ambiguous indicator of the cyclical performance of the economy.

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) calls for a measure of "labor-market economic hardship." The unemployment rate does not measure hardship directly; rather, it is, operationally, a measure of activity in the labor force. Suggestions for developing a measure of hardship to substitute for the unemployment rate have been advanced for more than a decade (see, e.g., Norris, 1978, and Levitan & Beleous, 1979, for

representative pleas). Levitan and Taggart (1974, 1976) proposed an Employment and Earnings Adequacy Index which expresses the number employed involuntarily part-time, discouraged workers, and family heads whose earnings are below the poverty level as a percent of the civilian labor force plus discouraged workers. Cain (1979a, p.37) pointed to many logical inconsistencies and practical intractabilities in the index. Moreover, he observed that these measures are available already in other, more consistent, forms. However,the Levitan and Taggart index does acknowledge that, as shown by Garfinkle and Plotnik (1975), not all people below the official poverty level and experiencing other labor market difficulties are unemployed. Unfortunately, such as hardship measure would need to be provided for local areas to serve the intents of various laws, including CETA legislation, to allocate funds to distressed areas; the components of the Levitan and Taggart index would include more sampling error in many instances than the unemployment rate for local areas.

Labor market shifts. Many analysts feel that the unemployment rate is failing as an indicator of the demand for labor because of recent age/sex shifts in the structure of the labor force. Also, many feel that unemployment rates no longer measure labor market problems in the same way they did ten or 20 years ago because a smaller proportion of the currently unemployed are primary family earners, are in families with more than one earner, and are eligible for more, on a real basis, government transfer payments than ever.

Flaim(1979) provided considerable evidence that increases in female labor force participation and the youth population have exerted a net upward pressure on the unemployment rate over the past two decades. Calculations based on time series unemployment rates of 22 age/sex groups in the labor force showed that from 0.6 to 1.0 percentage point of the secular increase in unemployment between 1957 and 1976 is due to these demographic shifts in the labor market. For instance, the 1976 overall unemployment rate of 7.68 percent would have been reduced to 6.64 percent and 7.01 percent if the demographic compositions of the labor force for 1957 and 1966, respectively, existed in 1976.

According to Antos, Mellow, and Triplett(1979), in a review of the effects of social and legislative changes along with other non-cyclical factors on the unemployment rate, the expansion and upgrading of unemployment insurance benefits have produced a small upward bias in the unemployment rate. They concluded, however, that the impact of multi-worker families on the unemployment was uncertain. Among husband and wife families, the proportion of families with more than one worker rose from 38 percent in 1960 to nearly 50 percent in 1977. Data necessary to address the impact of this increased participation on unemployment is incomplete. Antos, et al., also declared that sufficient biases existed to render uncertain the results of

studies of the reduction of unemployment due to enrollment in the government training programs that have expanded dramatically during the last two decades.

In a visible article, the results of which have been the subject of disputation, Clarkson and Meiners (1977) estimated that between 2.0 and 2.5 percent of recent increases in the unemployment rate is due to the creation of a new class of welfare beneficiaries who must register with unemployment offices to qualify for benefits. Antos, et al.,(1979, p.44) concluded that the Clarkson and Meiners study was flawed internally. Essentially, Clarkson's and Meiners' data had little, if anything, to say about unemployment, and their conclusions represented no more than unsubstantiated speculation. Antos, et al., found the few similar studies that have appeared of the relationship between updated and expanded welfare benefit coverage and unemployment to be inconclusive.

Flaim(1979) observed that studies of the relationship between changes in the minimum wage and unemployment have shown, for the most part, that youth unemployment is positively correlated with increases in the minimum wage. As expected from elementary economic theory, increases in unemployment are likely to result from increasing labor costs; however, the magnitude of this relationship, and even evidence of its existence, have varied considerably over published studies.

These studies of labor market shifts have been used by many to question the welfare significance of currently high rates of unemployment. As Cain (1979a, 1979b) has asserted, unemployment figures never were intended to measure hardship; rather, the unemployment rates is an indicator of the cyclical performance of the economy for those who can work, want work, and are searching for it--without any additional judgments of the utility of work for the jobseekers.

Unemployment/out of the labor force flows. After a review of labor force dynamics, Dornbusch and Fischer (1978) concluded that:

> average unemployment is not the result of a few people being unemployed for a long period of time. Rather unemployment is the result of people entering and leaving the pool of unemployment fairly often. (p. 482)

This rather recent observation (pioneered by Clark & Summers, 1979a,1979b, Feldstein, 1975, Hall, 1971, Marston, 1976, Perry, 1970, and Smith, Vanski, & Holt, 1974) casts a new net of understanding around unemployment statistics. Also, consideration of dynamic labor force flows aids in understanding the scope of youth joblessness.

The distinction is weak between unemployment and nonparticipation in the labor force. In fact, movements in and out of the labor force are quite frequent. This viewpoint was suggested most recently and forcefully by Clark and Summers (1979a) when they examined gross change data derived from CPS rotation group monthly flows between labor force states.

Clark and Summers reported that close to one-half of the unemployed end their spells of unemployment by withdrawal from the labor force. Of this group, 90 percent remain out of the labor force for less than less than one year before returning. These findings indicate close attachment of nonparticipants to the labor force and question the ability to distinguish practically between the officially unemployed and nonparticipants, whether this lack of discrimination is due to measurement errors or to actual labor force flows. According to Clark and Summers (1979a):

> many of those who remain unemployed may in fact be searching very casually and may not behave in a way very different from the majority of those who are out of the labor force. This inference is supported by survey (CPS) evidence that many of the unemployed engage only in a small amount of job search activity. (p.6)

Clark and Summers (1979a) found that, while 16 through 19 year olds have shorter durations of unemployment than people 20 years or older, young persons tend to withdraw from the labor force at higher rates than other cohorts (p.20 and Table 1). Young males are twice as likely to reenter the labor force into unemployment as are males 20 through 59 years of age. These data, and other displayed by Clark and Summers, portray a labor market, and especially a market for youths, which monthly CPS cross-sectional figures fail to describe completely. There appears to exist a "reserve army" of jobless youth drifting in and out of the labor force. The effects of these flows restrict our view of the nature and extent of youth joblessness.

Ashenfelter (1978) observed that the more jobs available in the economy, the fewer adults unemployed. However, this relationship fails to hold for youths due to the enormous flows of youths in and out of the labor force. Any consideration of youth joblessness will need to examine measured youth unemployment as well as youths out of the labor force in such categories as discouraged workers.

III. SCOPE OF YOUTH JOBLESSNESS

A wide variety of published reports are reviewed critically and extant data are re-analyzed in the following section to reveal trends, distinguishing factors in 1979, and the outlook for youth joblessness in the United States. An understanding of the measurement concepts, tools, and issues described in the previous section of this essay is essential for a clear understanding of the information reported in the current section. Also, a caveat is added for readers of this section: cautious comparisons among figures plotted in this section are necessary because of the arbitrary choice of scaling factors chosen for each graph.

Trends

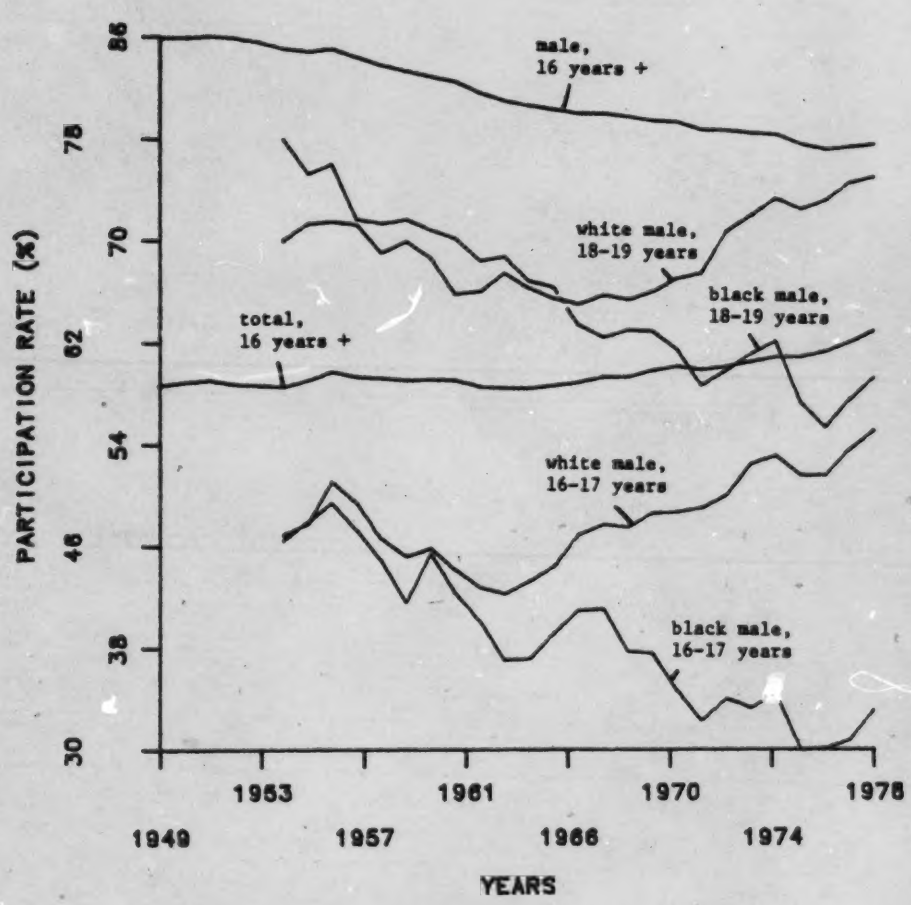
Labor force participation. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, women have displayed a dramatic increase in labor force participation over the last 30 years, accompanied by a slight decline for men. These changes are the result of alterations in social attitudes, lifestyles, marital and family patterns, and employment and retirement practices (Bednarzik & Klein, 1977). Generally, though, male participation rates have been higher than female rates.

Labor force participation patterns of youth over the past 30 years have been more complex to interpret than those for the entire labor force. First, the participation rates of 16-17 year olds have been lower than those of 18-19 year olds, independent of race. This probably reflects higher rates of school enrollment among 16-17 year olds. However, as Bowers (1979, p. 5 and footnote 6) suggested, school enrollment may itself be a response to economic conditions and poor job prospects. Going to school may be perceived as better than working in a low-paid, menial, or arduous full-time job (see also, Bowen & Finegan, 1969).

A second pattern emerging from Figures 3 and 4 is that, within 16-17 and 18-19 year age groups, white youths have participated at higher rates than blacks. Also notable is the widening difference between black and white participation rates beginning in about 1966. Newman (1979) tabulated similar trends in youth employment/population ratios by race. Also, Newman revealed marked racial differences among youths in recovery of employment prospects after recessionary periods, with blacks failing to recover as successfully from these economic setbacks as whites (see also, Smith, Vanski, & Holt, 1974).

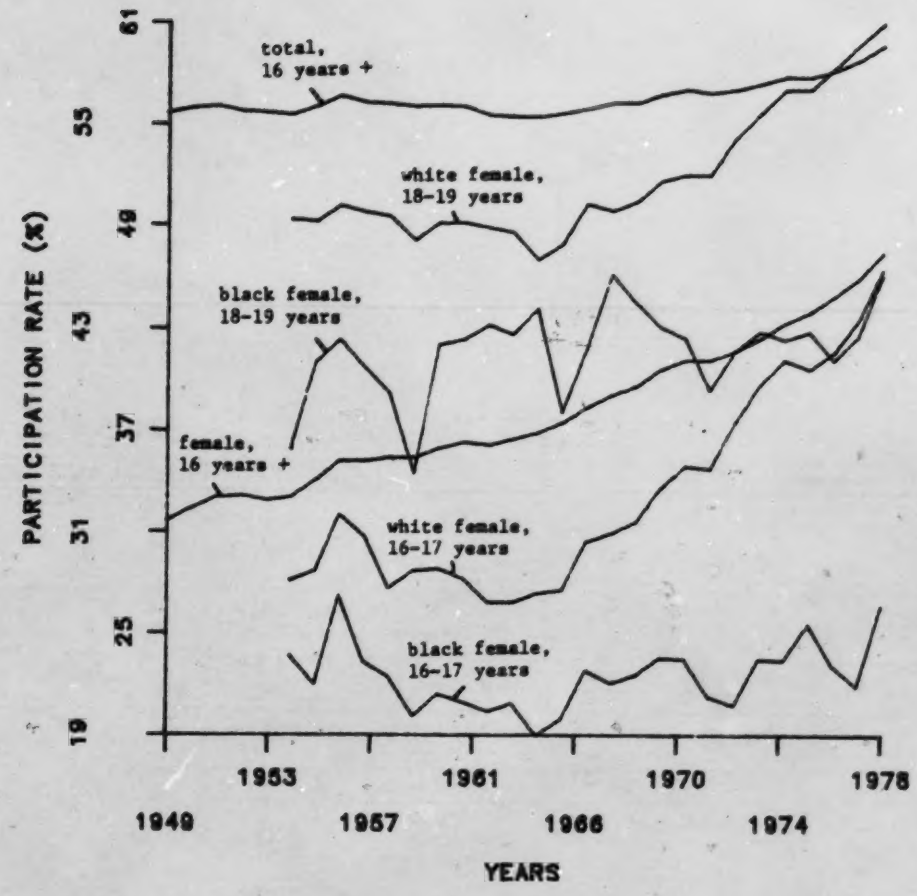
The number of young people reaching working age between the mid-1950's and the early 1970's nearly doubled each year (Bowman, 1977, Table 1). Moore (1977) wrote that this increase was similar to "throwing all of Canada onto the American labor market" (p.2). Adding another layer of complexity is that

FIGURE 3. MALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY RACE AND AGE: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1948–1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLE A-4

FIGURE 4. FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY RACE AND AGE: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1949–1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLE A-4

participation rates have increased more rapidly than the percent increase in jobs available (Ginzberg, 1980, p.4) and the population (Bowman, 1977, Chart 1). Decomposition of these age and racial trends in labor force participation into labor market and demographic components is difficult at best.

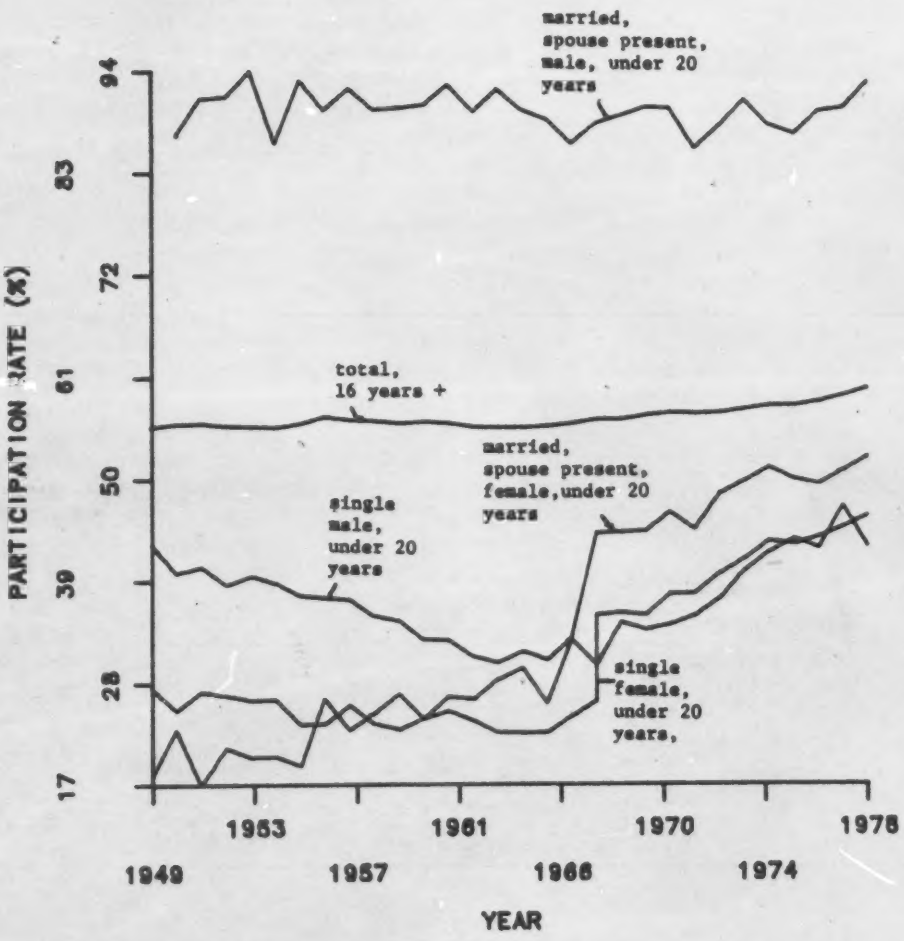
Whatever the effects of economic and population factors, marital status, as shown in Figure 5 and as observed in Bowen and Finegan (1969), has been a strong correlate of participation in the labor force. Married males under 20 years of age have had a strong attachment to the labor force as have prime age males, married, with spouse present (cf., Figure 5 in this essay with participation rates for other age groups shown in United States Department of Labor, 1979, Table B-2). Single males and females under 20 years of age have had relatively low participation rates; however, married females under 20 years have reflected the secular increase in female labor force participation.

Unemployment. Over the past 30 years, youth unemployment has been from about 1.5 to over 9 times the total unemployment rate (see Figures 6 and 7), depending on whether detailed age, gender, race, or geography is considered. Non-whites of both sexes have faired poorly compared to whites, with increases in the non-white to total unemployment ratio beginning in 1966. This increase in unemployment coincided with deterioration in labor force participation among black youths (cf., Figures 6 and 7 with Figures 3 and 4). Westcott (1976) and Browne (1978) presented cross-sectional evidence indicating that regional and rural/urban differences exist in unemployment rates and that youth unemployment by race, gender, and age tends to follow these geographic trends, although at higher than average rates in each region or place of residence.

School enrollment status is related to youth unemployment rates. In October 1978, 89 percent of the 16-17 year olds were enrolled in school; 45 percent of the 18-19 year olds were enrolled (computed from data presented by Young, 1979, Table A). Labor force participation and unemployment in October,1978, also related to school enrollment and age:

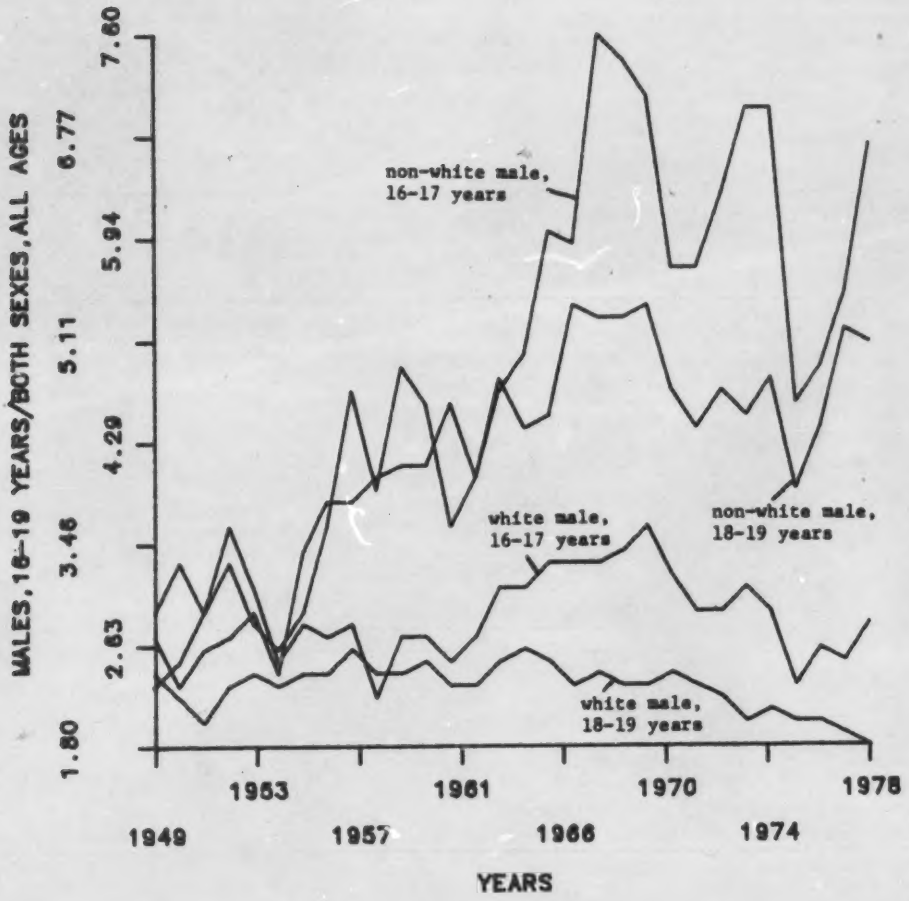
	Enrolled	Not Enrolled
Labor Force Participation Rate		
16-17 year olds	45.0	65.1
18-19 year olds	47.0	81.1
Unemployment Rate		
16-17 year olds	16.3	28.3
18-19 year olds	13.3	13.5

FIGURE 5. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY MARITAL STATUS, SEX, AND AGE: 1949–1978



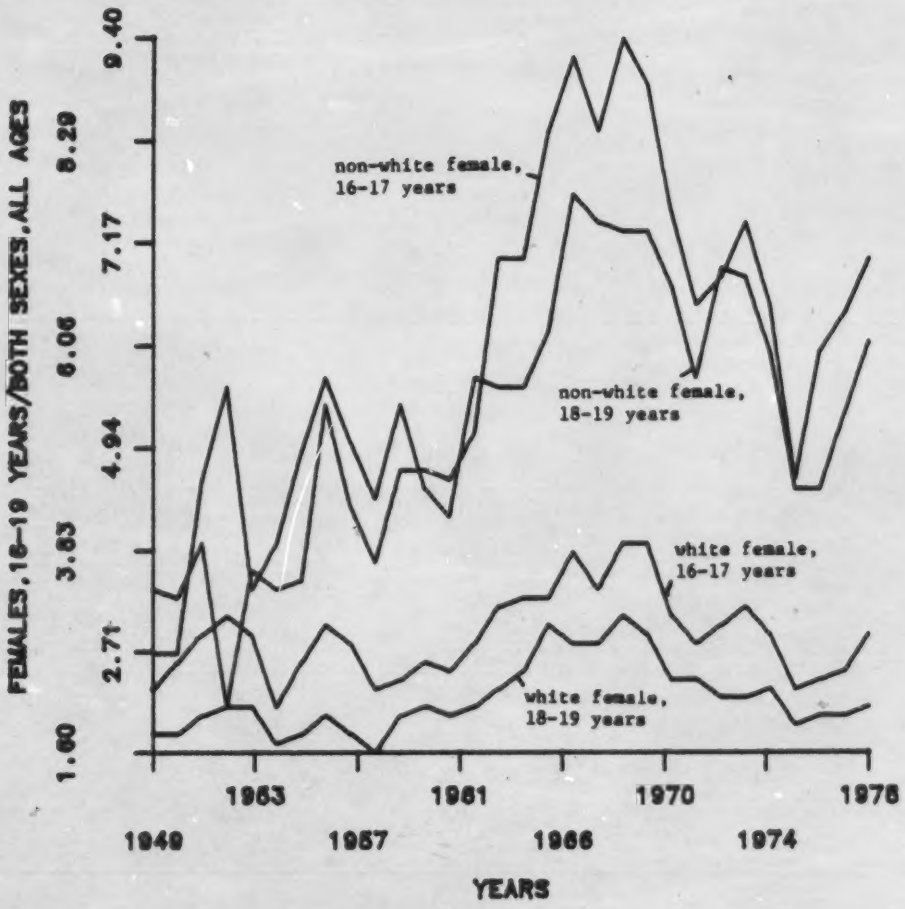
SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLES A–4 AND B–2

FIGURE 6. RATIO OF MALE YOUTH TO TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE AND RACE: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1949–1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLES A-20 AND A-21

FIGURE 7. RATIO OF FEMALE YOUTH TO TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY AGE AND RACE: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1949–1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLES A–20 AND A–21

During this same reference period, Young(1979, p.36) determined that 23 percent of the white youths not enrolled in school left before completing high school. Dropouts accounted for 36 percent of the black youths not enrolled and 54 percent of the out-of-school Hispanic youths. The unemployment rates for these dropout groups were more than double those of high school graduates and three times those of college graduates. Correlations of high school completion and unemployment experience in 1978 do not describe, by themselves, the worth of high school completion. For instance, would dropouts, had they completed high school, have had better employment prospects ? Would these dropouts have remained deficient in skills that may be important in finding and keeping a job ?

Was dropping out of school a rational economic decision necessary to buttress an already depressed family income ? Young (1979, pp.37-38) presented data to confirm the hypothesis that the percent of youth in school tended to increase with family income. Unemployment rates were highest among youths in families with less than $10,000 income per year. And, income distribution is correlated with race. In March 1974, the percent of unemployed youths in families with incomes below official poverty levels was three times as large for youths not enrolled in school compared to enrolled youth (Iden, 1976, p.93, Table 10). Almost one-half of the unemployed non-white youths in this reference month were not enrolled in school and unemployed.

Evidence on the relationship between high school curriculum type and unemployment among youth remains inconclusive. Grasso (1975, pp.148-150) found no perceptible relationship among a number of measures of unemployment and high school curriculum type among males in the 14 through 24 year old cohort of the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience (NLS). Grasso controlled his findings for scholastic aptitude, residence in 1969, and years of work experience. Grasso and Shea (1979a,1979b) found that white male vocational program completers and female business and office curriculum graduates experienced unemployment less frequently than their general curriculum counterparts. Using total spells of unemployment between 1966 and 1970 among males, vocational program graduates were as likely (blacks) or more likely (whites)to have had a spell of unemployment than were general curriculum graduates. They found, however, that general economic conditions dominated the unemployment experiences of these groups and that the results obtained varied according to the specific measure of unemployment examined.

The Grasso and Shea findings must be viewed critically from at least two weak points. First, categorical coding of NLS sample members by high school curriculum type may mask a great deal of variation in the length and quality of the curricula they experienced. Also, curriculum type is determined by student

responses to questionnaire items. Administrative record checks might not reveal the same curriculum assignments. Grasso and Shea (1979a, pp.105-107) acknowledged this source of potential error, and they reported personal communications from William Schmidt, Michigan State University, who found substantial disagreements among school reports, student reports, and administrative records of curriculum experience in the Longitudinal Study of Educational Effects (LSEE) (also known as the National Study of the High School Class of 1972).

A second weak point in the Grasso and Shea analyses of curriculum/unemployment correlates is in attrition in the NLS samples. The attrition rate for male cohort of the NLS has been an amazingly low 30 percent; in the female cohort, 10 percent. However, when relatively low frequency events such as unemployment are studied, such an attrition rate may be a serious source of sample selectivity bias. Heckman (1979) introduced empirical methods to correct for this bias in sample surveys. The Grasso and Shea findings should be scrutinized using Heckman's approach, which, in essence, requires estimation of the probability of staying in the sample using a logit function, estimation of a correction factor from the differences between stayers and leavers using methods pertaining to hazard functions, and, then, introduction of this factor into multivariate equations of prime interest (such as regressions on unemployment incidence) using stayers only.

Using data from the previously mentioned LSEE, Harrel and Wirtz (1979) concluded the following about youths not continuing their education beyond high school:

1. Black and lower socioeconomic status youth, particularly women, reported higher levels of unemployment than other races and socioeconomic groups.

2.The more hours a youth worked during the senior year of high school (excluding vacation periods), the lower the average amount of unemployment during the first four years after high school. This correlate of job experience was stronger for males than for females.

3.Among those working at least 15 weeks during the high school year, youths who did no homework averaged twice the amount of unemployment as those who reported doing homework. Obviously, addition of uniform homework requirements is not a proper policy response to this correlation; rather, homework may be a proxy for other variables such as motivation, encouragement from peers and teachers, or school quality.

4.Non-white youths who reported higher maternal educational expectations, leadership in extra-curricular activities, and residence in the South or Northeast United States were less likely to experience very long periods of unemployment.

A note of caution in interpreting the Harrel and Wirtz results, as well as others derived from the LSEE data base, is in order. Unemployment was not measured in the same reference period nor according to the same definitions used in the CPS and most other statistical reporting operations. Also, unemployment prevalence is related to cohort size and labor force participation rates for which Harrel and Wirtz were not able to account.

Becker and Hills (1979a) measured the relationship between scores on the Rotter Internal External Control Scale (Rotter, 1972) and subsequent adult unemployment in the NLS youth cohorts. The Rotter scale measured the extent to which youth believed that their success or failure depended on their own behavior rather than exogenous influences. Using multiple regression methods to control for a variety of individual differences, Becker and Hills found that "external" teenagers experienced longer periods of unemployment than "internals".

Other non-pecuniary variables have been found to be related to unemployment experience. For instance, Becker (1979) asserted that one reason for black/white youth unemployment differences is in access to information and leads for jobs through personal networks. And, according to Becker, recruitment by employers from among current employees is used heavily. To the extent that racial disparities exist in employment, then this recruiting mechanism may help to perpetuate these disparities among new entrants to the firm. The role of self-perceptions (as in Becker and Hills) and "who you know" in employability is part of our folk wisdom, but these variables are only recently the subject of empirical work linked to youth labor markets.

Using a human capital approach, Barret and Morgenstern (1974) found that blacks, young people, and other persons in occupations requiring few skills flow into unemployment more frequently than others. On the other hand, many analysts have asserted that the primary explanation for high youth unemployment figures is that young people make a clearly distinguishable component of the marginal or peripheral labor force whose employment is casual, intermittant, and part-time (Bowers, 1979, p.4 and citations in footnote 5; see also, McNown & Singell, 1976).

Based on interviews with 30 business executives and through independent historical research, Osterman(1976) concluded that institutional arrangements interact with the characteristics of unemployed youth to explain their relatively high unemployment levels and marginal labor force attachment. These institutional

arrangements include the existence of structured promotion and training ladders and considerable investment in on-the-job training in many firms. In such firms, the primary source of long-term and secure employment, the reluctance to hire and invest in potentially unproductive and short tenure youth--with age as a proxy for maturity, productivity, and stability--is understandable.

The percent of the youth population in military service affects the size of the civilian youth labor force, and, consequently, can affect youth unemployment levels and rates. Cooper(1978) found that the military's demand for labor is an important determinant of the size and composition of the youth labor force. However, Grasso and Shea(1979b, Table 4.3) saw no evidence from the NLS male youth cohort that service in the military had a direct impact on subsequent measures of labor market success.

The distribution of reasons for unemployment differ markedly between youths and the total civilian, noninstitutional population as demonstrated in Figure 8. Youths who never worked before have had rates over eight times the overall unemployment rate between 1970 and 1978. Although not as remarkable, youth reentering the labor force and leaving their last job also accounted for higher unemployment rates than the total.

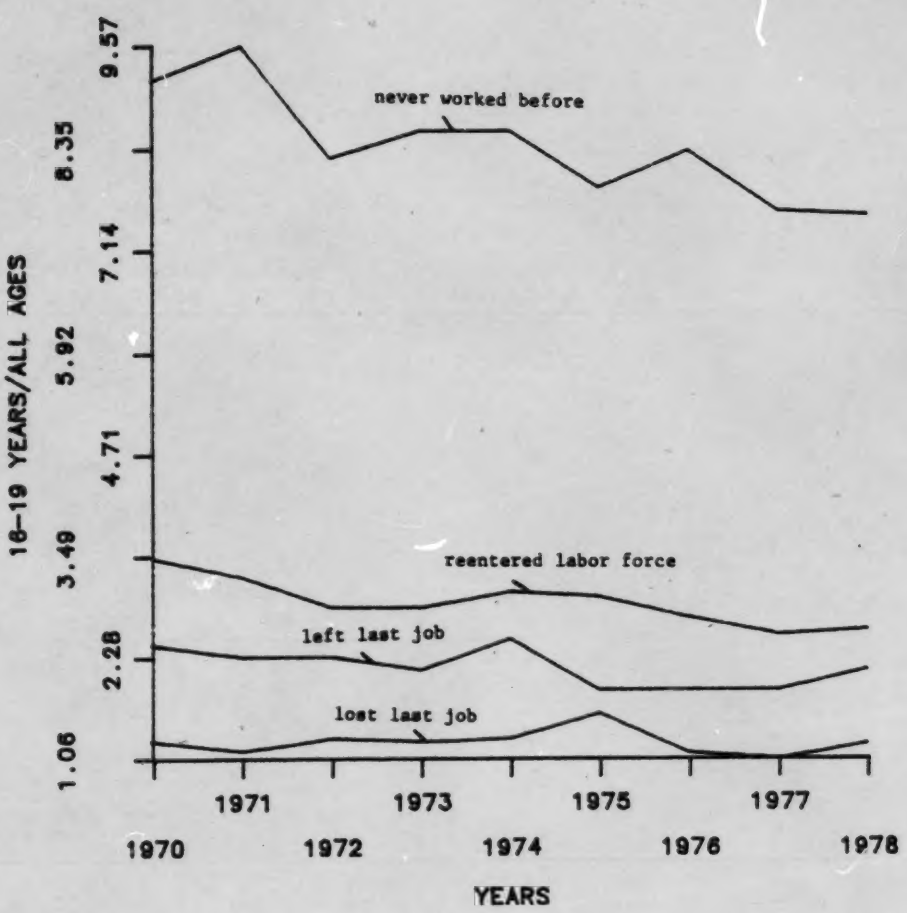
Data on reasons for youth unemployment coupled with information on the duration of unemployment among youth have created doubts about the welfare significance of youth unemployment rates. As displayed in Figure 9, youths have not accounted for more than ten percent of the total unemployed 15 weeks or longer between 1967 and 1978. The length of time a youth is unemployed can differ from the duration of unemployment measured during the CPS reference week because included in the duration figures are youths who have not completed a spell of unemployment--they remain unemployed (Frank,1978;Garfinkle, 1977; Lancaster, 1979; McGregor, 1978). Even so, this censoring of unemployment duration figures is likely to affect adult as well as youth unemployment duration data. However, whether biases exist in the duration figures by age is unknown.

Evidence on school enrollment rates and youth unemployment, as well as on reasons for and duration of, youth unemployment has moved such analysts as Feldstein (1973) to conclude that:

> The extremely high unemployment rates are therefore not quite what they seem. They reflect the peculiar labor force behavior of students and the temporary and voluntary unemployment that young people can afford in an affluent society. (p.14)

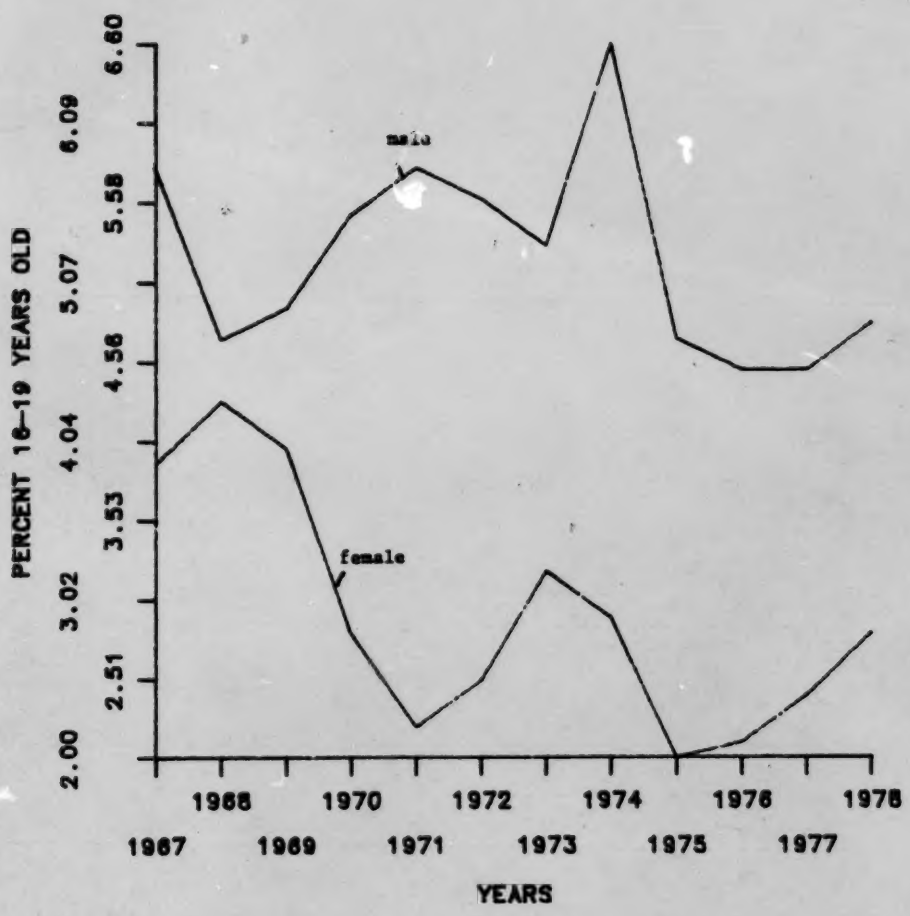
This conclusion neglects the labor force dynamics evident for youth which were described in this essay as among the issues in

FIGURE 8. RATIO OF YOUTH TO TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY REASON FOR UNEMPLOYMENT: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1970–1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLE A–27

FIGURE 9. YOUTH AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYED 15 WEEKS OR LONGER BY SEX: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1967–1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLE A–30

measurement of youth joblessness. Moreover, Feldstein neglects the possible "scarring" effects of youth unemployment described by Stephenson (1979).

Time series evidence on the relative work experience of youth, tabulated for the 1966 through 1978 period in Figure 10, do not help clear the confusion over the welfare significance of youth unemployment. By work experience is meant any amount of time employed within a particular year. Again, 16 and 17 year olds have had relatively less work experience during the years plotted in Figure 10, while 18 and 19 year olds have had relatively more work experience, which is explanable, at least in part, by school enrollment rates of the two cohorts. However, such work experience may have been of short duration and the reference year may have been dominated by a larger percent of time unemployed or out of the labor force for some youths.

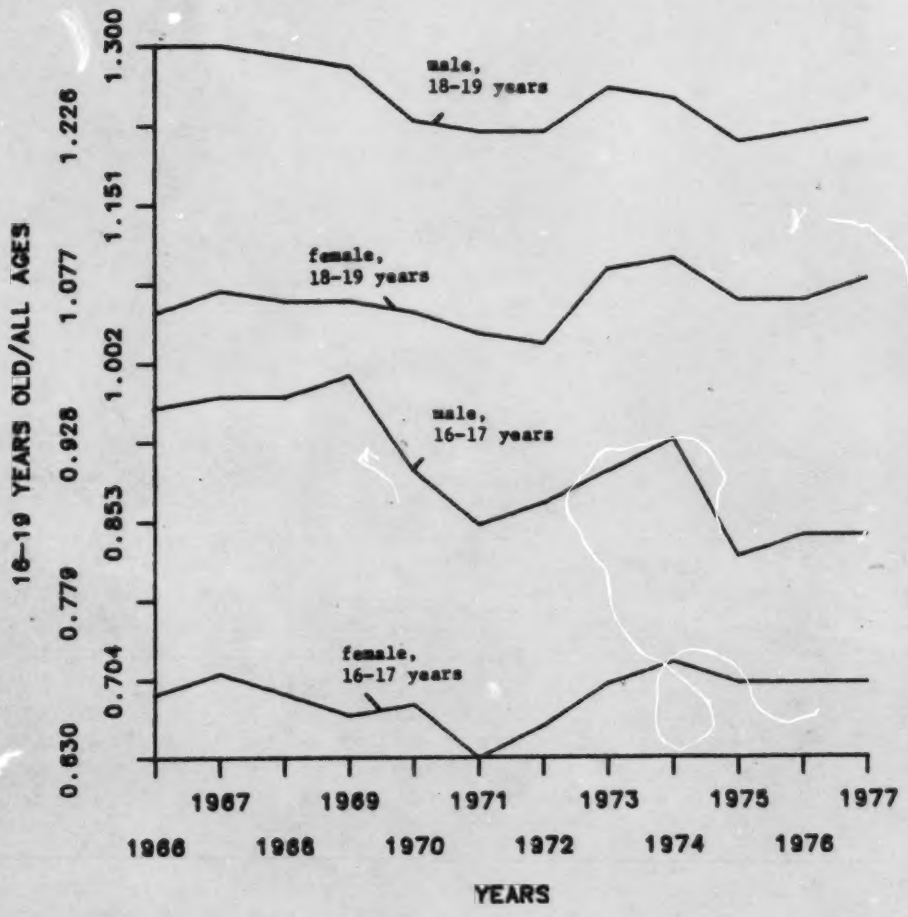
Nonparticipation. The residual left after computing the labor force participation rate is the percent neither employed nor unemployed. Most nonparticipants in the civilian, non-institutional population of the United States have been engaged in home responsibilities, and most of these nonparticipants have not contemplated entering the labor force (United States Department of Labor, 1979, Table A-13). However, nonparticipation among youth follows school enrollment categories (Young, 1979, Table A).

The category of "discouraged workers" is among those into which persons out of the labor force are classified which has generated considerable interest. The number among discouraged workers who cite labor market factors for their inability to find work has been sensitive to cyclical economic pressures; the number citing age or lack of education as reasons they feel they would not be able to find work shows little cyclical movement (Leon & Rones, 1980, p.10). Time series analyses of CPS data have indicated that the number of discouraged workers rises as unemployment increases (Flaim, 1973). However, sampling variability and difficulties in point estimation of discouraged worker rates can produce standard errors of estimate that are roughly twice as large as those for other CPS variables(Flaim, 1969). Nevertheless, discouraged workers have comprised less than one percent of the population between 1968 and 1978 (see Figure 11). And, discouraged youth represent an even smaller proportion of the population during these years.

Distinguishing Factors: 1979

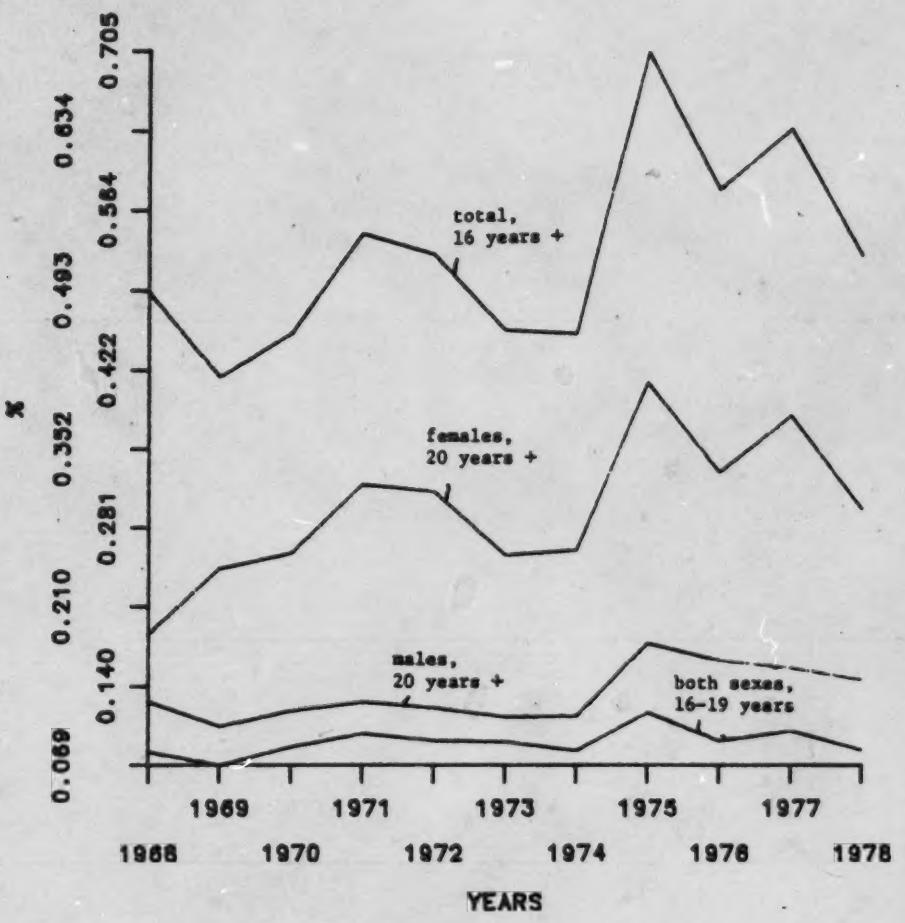
Contained in Table 1 are listings of the number of chances out of 100 of being in various labor force states by selected personal characteristics. These chances were computed from the Annual Demographic File of the 1979 CPS for youths, 16-19 years old, and for adults, 20+ years of age. Caution is necessary in

FIGURE 10.RATIO OF YOUTH TO TOTAL PERCENT OF POPULATION WITH WORK EXPERIENCE DURING THE YEAR BY AGE AND SEX, 1966–1977



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLE B-15

FIGURE 11. DISCOURAGED WORKERS AS A PERCENT OF THE NON-INSTITUTIONAL POPULATION BY SEX AND AGE: ANNUAL AVERAGES, 1968-1978



SOURCE: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 1979, TABLES A-13 AND A-1

Table 1

Chances of Classification of Youths and Adults in the Civilian Noninstitutional Population of the United States Into Labor Force States by Selected Personal Characteristics: March, 1979

States & Characteristics	Chances Out of 100 If Youth 16-19 Years	If Adult 20+ Years
In Civilian, Noninstitutional Population	**9.8**	**90.2**
Employed	**45.2**	**60.8**
and, if employed...		
Male	52.0	58.4
Female	48.0	41.6
Never Married	92.7	18.4
Married	6.5	68.7
Divorced, Widowed, Separated	0.7	13.0
White	91.4	88.5
Non-White	8.6	11.5
Unemployed	**8.8**	**3.3**
and, if unemployed...		
Male	56.5	53.8
Female	43.5	46.2
Never Married	91.8	32.1
Married	7.2	50.3
Divorced, Widowed, Separated	1.0	17.6
White	79.6	77.0
Non-White	20.4	23.0
Seeking Full-Time Job	47.2	85.0
Seeking Part-Time Job	52.8	15.0
Veteran	0.7	19.3
Completed 8 Years Elementary School	3.5	10.8
Completed 4 Years High School	88.5	61.8
Out of Labor Force	**45.9**	**35.9**
and, if out of labor force...		
Male	46.3	27.1
Female	53.7	72.9
Never Married	94.4	10.7
Married	5.1	64.5
Divorced, Widowed, Separated	0.5	24.8
White	78.8	88.2
Non-White	21.1	11.8

Source: Estimated from person records in the Annual Demographic File for the 1979 Current Population Survey.

Note: Figures listed in this table are conditional statements, and, therefore, must be interpreted with care. For instance, chances were 52 out of 100 in 1979 that, ignoring correlations with other factors, you were a male if you were 16 through 19 years of age and if you were employed. Another way of saying this is that among employed youth, 52 percent were males. This is not the same as the joint chances of being young, employed, and male.

interpreting these data because these rates are not stated ceteris paribus as might be expected through multivariate analysis of correlates of labor force status. In other words, race and educational attainment might be related to each other as well as to labor force status, and the independent relationships of each factor to labor force status are not portrayed, therefore, by the rates listed in Table 1. Additional analyses, using multinomial logit techniques similar to those applied by Antos and Mellow (1978), would be necessary to determine the probabilities of being in various labor force states by these personal characteristics. Even if implemented, these multivariate models would inadequately describe the youth labor market, which would be more appropriately specified through a simultaneous equation approach (Cooper, 1978).

Differences evident between youths and adults in Table 1 are similar to previous years plotted in Figures 3 through 11. Youths had a greater chance than adults of being unemployed and out of the labor force, and less chance than adults of being employed. Also clear are differences between youths and adults in chances of seeking part-time and full-time work, with youths more likely to have been part-time job seekers. Chances were roughly two and one-half times as great that a non-white youth was out of the labor force or unemployed as among the employed.

Strong adult/youth differences are evident in all labor force states by marital status and educational attainment. These differences reflect the lower probability of ever being married and higher average educational attainment among youth, independent of labor force status. Also, this demonstrates the importance of considering, and perhaps standardizing for, age/sex specific rates of participation in schooling, marriage, military service (as shown in the unemployed category of Table 1), and other societal institutions and structures in examining labor force activity.

Outlook

What are the prospects for youth unemployment? Perhaps describing the prospects for rain in State College, PA, on June 14, 1987, would be as easy. Youth unemployment will continue to be determined by product and resource markets, the prospects for which are loaded with uncertainties. Moreover, social influences on lifestyles and the effects of legislation also loom as tall question marks over the youth unemployment problem. What will be the health and nature of the economy ? What will be the trends in labor force participation by age and sex ? What will be the effectiveness of political will to provide work for all those who seek it, to use a bit of Humphrey-Hawkins language ? What will work be like ? And, how will changes in work/leisure preferences affect the nature of work? The list of questions seems endless.

Bowman (1977, p.66) studied changes in the size and composition of the labor force through the mid-1980's and determined that: (a) the labor force is likely to slow its growth to about two-fifths of its 1975 rate in the 1985-1990 period; and (b) the proportion of teenagers and young adults in the labor force will decline sharply over the 1980's. Flaim and Fullerton (1978) confirmed these expected trends using three scenarios depicting various assumptions about the level of labor force growth. Easterlin, Wachter, and Wachter (1978, p.15) considered this trend to be projected with confidence because it largely mirrors the downturn in fertility that started around 1960.

Even though these projected demographic shifts are likely to influence youth labor force participation, they may not cure youth employment problems. The absolute number of youths may decrease, but will institutional barriers and other factors influencing youth transition to adulthood be changed ?

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Provided in this essay was an examination of the definition and scope of youth joblessness. The leap is wide between this information and prescriptive statements for vocational education practice that would result in reduced youth joblessness. Yet, several implications can be derived for policy consideration and analysis.

Reduction of Youth Joblessness--A Goal?

According to Evans(1971), "vocational education is that part of education which makes an individual more employable in one group of occupations than in another" (p.1). Is the reduction of youth joblessness a goal for vocational education that can be derived from Evans' definition? Not necessarily. The key is the term, "employable".

I have made the point elsewhere (Passmore, 1976, 1977, 1978, as well as Passmore & Hruska, 1974, 1975, 1980) in more detail that education for work, as a lagging enterprise in the sense that it reacts to economic directions, cannot be expected to be responsible for producing labor market outcomes for society and individuals because these outcomes are, for the most part, determined by decisions that are made outside its boundaries. In other words, merely because elevated youth joblessness figures have persisted as described in this essay does not mean that the proper policy response is more vocational education. Such a response assumes that the cause of youth employment is a mismatch between the skills of youth and skills needed for employability in the economy.

Only indirectly through improving the employability skills of youth can vocational education contribute to, say, a reduction in youth joblessness or an improvement in the lifetime earnings profile of a particular target group. Conditions necessary for vocational education to produce this indirect effect are that: (a) enough jobs exist for those who become employable; (b) vocational education received is, in the worst case, not an impediment to seeking and keeping work (Evans' definition describes optimal vocational education); and (c) those receiving vocational education do not find non-market activity or residence in low demand areas more attractive than the work options available after vocational education is received.

If reduction of youth joblessness is, indeed, a goal for vocational education, then the information collated in this essay may help to describe personal characteristics of youth that are correlates of youth joblessness. These correlates may be useful in establishing society's priorities for target groups to be served by vocational education. However, hardly a year goes by

when there are not several major review articles outlining information similar to that provided in this essay. Whether through failure of will, lack of clear understanding of the problem, or the practical inconsequence of the problem's effects, youth joblessness, particularly non-white youth joblessness, has persisted for many years, in the troughs as well as on the peaks of economic activity.

Barriers to Youth Employment

Even if the conditions existed for vocational education to reduce youth joblessness, a wide array of social, economic, and legal factors, some of which were cited in this essay, interact to affect youth joblessness in complex ways that are not clearly understood. A synthesis of existing knowledge of these barriers should be undertaken so that policy makers can develop an understanding of what formal, school-based, federally-reimbursed vocational education could do to reduce youth joblessness below socially acceptable and efficient levels. For instance, what portion and kind of youth joblessness could be reduced by improving the job skills of youth? Which youth? How is the effectiveness of this skills creation activity affected by other factors? A large amount of information posing answers to these questions is available, and the controversies are pervasive over the significance of these barriers to youth employment.

The information reviewed and tabulated in this essay reveals the personal correlates of youth joblessness. Most of these are ascriptive characteristics--sex,race,age--that are proxy measures of other, possibly treatable, factors directly or indirectly related to youth employability such as quality of education received or availability and attractiveness of non-market, perhaps illegal, opportunities and cash or in-kind income. In one sense, then, the distinguishing factors tabulated in this essay, such as race and marital status, could provide "keywords" for reviewing and classifying other studies and opinions about barriers to youth employment.

Consequences of Youth Joblessness

Information on the nature and significance of barriers to youth employment would add to our ability to determine what vocational education could do to improve youth employability. Whether anything--and, if so, what-- should be done to reduce youth joblessness is still another important policy question, the answer to which would help to more finely tune policy responses to this problem. For example, is youth joblessness part of the rites of passage into adult economic life in the United States? Or, is the subsequent welfare of youths with more and longer spells of joblessness likely to be depressed? Are the costs--direct, indirect, pecuniary, psychic--of youth joblessness

acceptable in comparison to the expected benefits of policies and practices designed to reduce youth joblessness? And, what is the degree of individual, political, and public tolerance of these consequences?

Evidence is beginning to emerge to answer these questions, although not in the same amount as information on the "causes" of youth joblessness. This evidence should be assembled, reviewed critically, and reliable knowledge should be synthesized from it. In this way, policy makers could articulate whether anything could be done by vocational education to reduce youth joblessness with whether anything should be done--even if it could.

V. SUMMARY

Provided in this essay were characteristics of jobless youth in the United States. First, measurement concepts, tools, and issues in determining joblessness were reviewed. Youth labor markets were found to be characterized by large flows in and out of the labor force, making measures of youth unemployment underestimates of the scope of youth joblessness. Then, trends, factors in 1979, and the outlook for youth joblessness were presented. By all measures, youths over the past 30 years have exhibited less attachment to the labor force than adults. Non-whites and 16-17 year olds have had even more depressed labor market data.

Data presented and research reviewed in this essay merely describe the definition and scope of youth joblessness for policy analysis and consideration in vocational education. Necessary next steps are: (a) clarification of whether vocational education sees the reduction of youth joblessness as a goal; (b) determination of the barriers to youth employment, beyond youth skill deficits, that could constrain what vocational education could do to reduce youth joblessness; and (c) consideration of the consequences of youth joblessness so that whether vocational education should attempt to design policies and actions to reduce youth joblessness can be determined.

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